

Norfolk Woman Convicted of Two Counts of Embezzlement and Theft from Indian Tribal Organization

Friday, December 16, 2022

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Nebraska

Acting United States Attorney Steve Russell announced that Andrea Rodriguez, 42, of Norfolk, Nebraska, was sentenced today in Lincoln, Nebraska, by Judge John M. Gerrard for two counts of embezzlement and theft from Indian tribal organization less than \$1,000. Rodriguez was sentenced to 4 years' probation, a fine of \$10,000 and \$100 for special assessment fees. There is no parole in the federal system. Rodriguez was additionally ordered to pay \$19,431.57 in restitution.

From at least July 2019 until the end of October 2020, Andrea Rodriguez was employed by the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska as the Director of the Ponca Tribe's Domestic Violence Department. In this role, Rodriguez was responsible for handling and providing final authorizations for the allocation of monies which the Ponca tribe received as part of the 2018 Victims of Crime Act ("VOCA") Assistance Grant. These monies were intended to be used to support Ponca tribal members who were dealing with domestic-violence related issues.

Andrea Rodriguez created false reimbursement requests indicating they were intended to pay for medical bills, grocery bills, and home furnishing and décor-related expenses for certain tribal domestic violence victims. She then signed the final authorization for the reimbursement of these bills from tribal grant funds. In truth, the bills being reimbursed were not expenses incurred by tribal domestic violence victims. Instead, they were for Rodriguez's own personal bills.

In total, Rodriguez received approximately \$19,431.57 in tribal funds as a result of this scheme.

"HHS-OIG will not tolerate any attempts to defraud federal programs, especially those involving vulnerable populations," said Curt L. Muller, Special Agent in Charge with the

Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Inspector General. "We are proud to work alongside our law enforcement partners to hold accountable any perpetrator of fraud."

This case was jointly investigated by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General.